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ABSTRACT

Group teaching techniques for college students of average potential in reading and study skills services are presented. A student is first given a diagnostic battery of tests including at least one standardized reading test, a spelling test, and a listening test. The results are discussed with the student, and joint planning with the instructor or counselor takes place regarding the use of materials and equipment. The group teaching procedures described include lecture demonstrations; practice with timed readings, filmstrips and pacers, and listening/study skills taped lessons; and the use of educational television, operant conditioning, and models for vocabulary development. A list of reading and study skills materials for the college level is given and references are included. (DE)

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# GROUP TECHNIQUES: READING AND STUDY SKILLS SERVICES FOR THE AVERAGE POTENTIAL COLLEGE STUDENT

by

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Surveys reported by Lowe (1968) led him to conclude that college reading and study skills services have been in existence since before 1900; their growth seems to parallel the size in the . . . increasingly larger amounts of reading required of college students; and that college reading programs are here to stay. Counseling and Testing Bureaus on college campuses throughout the country have identified their students as high, low, and average potential candidates for a college education by the use of a wide variety of instruments and techniques. The literature reveals, however, that nearly 100 per cent of all college students are reading at a level of efficiency considerably below their assessed potential.

The concern of this paper is with group teaching techniques of the reading and study skills services for the college student of average potential, regardless of racial or socio-economic strata. Needless to say, the services provided for the hundreds of thousands of students in this category are many and varied, depending on the existing local philosophy, goals of the program, the number of students enrolled, their needs and interests, the types of materials, and the number of staff personnel available. For example, Adams (1968) pointed out that in the 1966-67 school year, the University of South Florida's Reading Center tutored as few as two students, Southern University of Baton Rouge six, while other institutions served students numbering between the low of 2 and 6 and a high of 886, the latter being the University of Minnesota. Thus, it can be seen that these services differed according to local needs.

It should be pointed out that with the current excitement over programmed and modern self-instructional materials, many of the reading programs on large university campuses have abandoned group teaching techniques in favor of the individualized approach. Nevertheless, the majority of programs are still organized within the framework of the class or group idea with enrollments ranging from 15 to 20. There is much merit in small group instruction. Sherbourne (1963), for example, sees in it a time-saving function and an appeal to the cooperative spirit which helps to motivate the students. Or, putting it another way, group teaching promotes confidence in the students by discovering that many of their own faults and frustrations actually are common problems. Research reveals, for example, that the ability to concentrate, the desire to improve comprehension and rate, and remembering are high on the lists of common problems expressed by students. The difference may be one of degree, yet not wide enough to warrant separate or individual instruction in every aspect of the program. In fact, too frequently the benefits of using team learning, particularly in small group settings within the larger group, have been ignored.

Before a student is placed in a group for instructional purposes, he is usually administered a diagnostic battery of tests including at least one standardized reading test, a spelling test, and a listening test. The following are among tests currently being used for diagnostic purposes: The Iowa Silent Reading Test,

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Cooperative Reading Test, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, The SRA Placement Test, The Survey Section of the Diagnostic Reading Test, the OM Form of the Cooperative Spelling Test, the Cooperative Dictionary Test, the Brown-Carlson Listening Comprehension Test, and the Survey of Reading/Study Efficiency Record.*

The results of the tests are discussed with the student individually or in small groups when warranted. For example, in the latter situations, common problems as listed by the students and as evidenced by the test results are discussed and joint planning with the instructor or counselor takes place regarding the use of materials and equipment. Every effort is made to assist the student in understanding his problems and performances and in planning his program for improvement. This counseling-oriented type of program according to Spache (1969) represents the most advanced development in the college-adult reading field.

## Scope and Sequence of Reading and Study Skills Services

Pauk (1968) emphasized that "The only body of skills and techniques which have a future are the reading and study skills that a student must employ in his studying to master, to some degree, his academic work." Nevertheless, many reading services include practice in speed reading, ocular motility training, and activities that supposedly discourage or reduce forms of vocalization when reading. Without belaboring the point, the following represents the general scope of reading and study skills offerings at the college level for students of average potential:

Reading Comprehension/Study Skills
- Using Book Parts
- Selecting the Main Idea in Paragraphs/Chapters
- Selecting Supporting Details in Paragraphs/Chapters
- Understanding the Author's Meaning
- Underlining/Marking Textbooks
- Understanding Implied Meanings
- Following Directions/Making Inferences/Assessing Bias
- Summarizing/Drawing Conclusions/Evaluating
- Listening/Taking Notes from Lectures
- Notetaking from Books
- Outlining
- Using the Library
- Reading Maps, Globes, Charts, and Graphs
- Reviewing/Skimming/Scanning

Vocabulary Improvement
- Spelling/Word Analysis
- Using the Context/Glossary/Dictionary

Rate Improvement/Speed Reading

Eye Movement Training

There appears to be little or no reference in the literature to the sequence of study skills at the college level as this is usually determined by the needs of the students. If a single worktext is used by the group or small within-groups, the reading difficulty is viewed as more or less the same throughout the group. On the other hand, if materials used are graded and coded according to difficulty levels, no problem exists. It stands to reason that cooperative planning with each student

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* Editor's Note - A bibliography of standardized tests is included in the paper by Fisher, Joseph A., "Diagnostic and Screening Instruments: Tests and Devices for Assisting College Reading Skills" to be discussed in this seminar.

would lead him to seek practice in getting literal meanings, understanding what the author said prior to making inferences, drawing conclusions, etc., and practice in word analysis prior to that of rate building. The important thing is that the student must himself be selective and rather than to engage in busy work with the entire class, direct his efforts to the development of those skills which he actually needs in pursuing his academic goals. His problem may be that of not knowing the reference skills, how to underline, or outline for best results and he should be able to devote his efforts to these. He might not need to work in the area of vocabulary building if the course were an all-inclusive one.

One clear-cut exception to predetermining the sequence of skills is the situation found in working with groups of foreign students where it may be necessary to plan a sequence for vocabulary development. Word analysis, both in and out of context, is a skill that would lend itself to a sequential scheme.

## Group Teaching Techniques

Since examination of each study skill in a separate teaching context would require more space and time than allowed, some grouping of these is to be expected. Moreover, it is difficult to ever teach any one skill in isolation because all skills are interrelated. Although the term "speed reading" has fallen into disrepute, the fact remains that both reading comprehension and speed of reading appear to be positively related to academic achievement. Group teaching techniques for developing skills in these areas follow:

1. Lecture-Demonstration. On the first day of class, the teacher presents a basic orientation to the reading program including goals, procedures, and a review of the directions for using the materials and equipment. At intervals, she may also give illustrated lectures via transparencies on rate flexibility and various study skills such as using the library, marking textbooks, outlining, etc. These sessions are followed by student practice of skills discussed using their worktexts or handouts.

2. Practice in Timed Essay Reading. During this activity, the teacher uses a stop-watch or wall clock timer to signal the beginning and ending of the reading act. When workbook materials or booster readings are involved, only the beginning time is signalled and students are directed to note their own ending time. If passages are being read using the SRA Rate Builders, however, time is signalled at the beginning and end since a predetermined time limit is set by the authors. General procedures for using most workbook and practice materials include distributing a single copy to each student, designating the page number and title of the selection to be read, stating the specific purpose (improving reading rate and comprehension in factual prose, for example), and signalling beginning time. Individual Booster and Power Builders are different in title and levels of difficulty. Therefore, when using this material, it is impossible to mention titles. Routine matters of working, however, are discussed with all. After reading, students complete their comprehension checks and record their scores, including their reading rates.

Short exercises such as those in the SRA Reading for Understanding Cards are placed on the desks to be used by those completing their assignments early while they wait for group discussion of the comprehension checks. Many students are eager to get these extra practice bonuses during class time. SRA Rate Builders may be issued to students in triplicate, providing a sufficient number of cards at each level is available. During the comprehension checks, it is not unusual to find students arguing a point against the stated answers. In fact, in some instances one has to carefully weigh the information given before agreeing to the answers to some inferential questions or statements. But this questioning is indicative of critical thinking and is to be encouraged. Even though the SRA materials are individualized, teachers may use the results of the students' daily work as a basis for forming small

groups to be given special practice or instructions in specific skills such as finding the main idea, word analysis techniques, etc. The suggestion by Sherbourne (1963) to place on the bulletin board notes to the students asking them to join certain small groups for special work seems to work well.

The following are listed among the most widely used worktexts and standard materials:

Read with Speed and Precision, Leedy, Paul. McGraw-Hill Book Company.
SRA College Programs I and II, Science Research Associates.
SRA Reading for Understanding (Senior Edition), Science Research Associates.
The Art of Efficient Reading, Spache, George and Berg, Paul, Macmillan Company.
Study Type Reading Exercises, Strang, Ruth et al, The H.W. Wilson Co.
Standard Test Lessons in Reading, McCall, William and Crabbs, Lehah, Teachers College Press.
Breaking the Reading Barrier, Gilbert, Doris W., Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Learning to Learn, Smith, Donald E.P. (Ed.), Harcourt, Brace and World.
The Improvement of College Reading, Glock, Marvin D., Houghton Mifflin Company.

3. Practice with Filmstrips and Pacers. Manuals accompanying filmstrips and pacers assert that they are designed to aid the student in decreasing fixation time, reducing the number of regressive movements, increasing span of recognition, minimizing subvocalization, and in the case of some foreign students, aid in the development of left-to-right eye movement habits. Studies reviewed by Gates (1947), Spache (1963), and Tinker (1967, 1968) led them to conclude that improvement in these areas can be made just as effectively through the use of software with a financial saving to the center. Proponents of the use of pacers and filmstrips in controlled reading, however, claim high interest value and also the advantage of providing assistance in improving reading rates through external pressure as they free the student to read at a predetermined rate.

In portraying the shifting scene in reading training, McConihe (1967) made the following statement: "I do not believe there is a great falling-off in the use of mechanical devices. It would appear that the change comes in a changed attitude on the part of the users. Instructors no longer look upon them as the heart of a good program but rather as motivating devices and as supplementary aids to perfecting skills through interesting drill."

A variation from the usual procedure of having the entire class view a filmstrip together* is often welcomed by students. Depending on the number of controlled reader juniors available and size of the classroom, several small clusters of students may view different filmstrips during the same class period. This arrangement provides for common interests as well as comparable reading rates and difficulty levels. After previewing the selection including a look at the vocabulary, the filmstrip is shown. This is followed by comprehension and vocabulary checks with some discussion as desired. Currently used film sets include the Purdue Reading Films, the Harvard Film Series, the Iowa Film Series, Educational Developmental Laboratory Filmstrip Sets, Percepto-Scope and Advanced Films Programs, and the Tachomatic 500 Projector with High School and College Film Series.

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* Editor's Note - Currently, most college reading specialists do not advocate the use of filmstrips for group reading training as regardless of the speed level set on the machine, some students will be frustrated trying to keep pace and others will find the rate too slow. However, many specialists concede that such projected filmstrips may motivate students if demonstrated before a group, as contrasted with using the machines and filmstrips for reading training.

Though designed for individual use, the Shadowscopes, Rateometers, and other Pacers can also be applied in small group situations. For example, at the start of a session with machines, the teacher may distribute easy, interesting sets of coded materials to be read at high rates of speed. After the reading, a key word or perhaps a sentence or so will serve to cue students in on the materials that belong within the same story or passage. Each then moves into his group where comprehension checks and efficiency rates are discussed. Often the materials are taken from lower level science or social studies laboratories; the newspaper, magazine articles, or from the paperbacks in use.

Following these 10-12 minute warm-ups, students then select materials for practice commensurate with their reading levels, or they may use their own textbooks keeping in mind the notion of flexibility in rate as they read.

4. Listen and Read/Study Skills. The major purpose of a Listen and Read Program is synonomous to that of a Study Skills Program, i.e., to equip the student with more effective skills and techniques with which to master the contents of lectures, to master the textbook, to collect data and write the research paper, to study for and pass examinations. In short, to become an independent studier. The teacher orients the entire class in the use of the Listening Laboratory equipment and materials.

Among the most popular taped lessons are the following: Studying Effectively, Finding the Purpose in an Article, Marking Textbooks, Studying for and Taking Examinations, Shifting Gears in Reading, Following the Author's Organization, and Reading Textbooks. To use the Educational Developmental Laboratories' Series Listen and Read effectively, a worktext must be provided for each student. It is suggested that these be purchased by the students so that they can be written in.

Follow-up or extended applications of certain lessons should be complete with mimeographed sheets containing comprehension checks and spaces for making notes. For example, at Northern Illinois University (NIU), Marion Hall and Margaret Walker who work with special groups of students with average potential on a semester basis solicited the following lecture tapes from other disciplines to supplement the EDL Tape MN 26, Taking Notes From Lectures: Speech: "Introductions, Transitions, and Conclusions", (15 min.), MacFarlin; English: "The University As It Is Today", (15 min.), Doderline; Political Science: "Naturalization, Immigration, and Citizenship", (1 hr.), Dionisopolus; and Biology: "Origins of Life", (1 hr.), Feyerherm. The reading teachers developed a list of comprehension checks for each lecture. In addition, students were urged to take increasingly better notes from each lecture. It was especially interesting to listen to students discuss the differences in voice quality, intonations, types of presentations, and the organizations of the lectures as they were made more cognizant of the signs and signals used by lecturers other than words.

A take-off from EDL Tape MN 16, Reading Newspapers, also brought increased interest and improvement of the amount of reading in this medium of communication. The ten classes of special students fanned out with their follow-up assignments to the library and the Journalism Building. At the Library, they were to select newspapers from five different cities and make exhaustive lists of divergent views on the Vietnam Moratorium using in each case the five W's. At the Journalism Department, students were given their first opportunity to watch the operation of the WIRE SERVICE under the direction of Dr. Albert Walker. This experience led several students to talk about the possibility of selecting Journalism as a major.

Teachers in the NIU Reading Center have used other tapes in the EDL Series to motivate the students to delve more deeply into their problems. For example, Lesson 30, Studying for and Taking Examinations was followed by reviewing actual exams from classes the students are taking. Students held small group discussions with the teachers who examined their papers in psychology, biology, history, music, art, and government. Somewhat similar activities are reported by Darrell D. Bentz

at Oklahoma State University. Subject area teachers contributed taped lectures and interesting story materials to be used in the reading program at Bacone Junior College with culturally deprived students.

5. The Medium of Educational Television. While it appears that the greater number of ETV programs are geared to the training of teachers of reading and reading specialists, the college-adult reading programs are not necessarily empty-handed. Closed-circuit television programs in reading improvement at the University of Dayton and the Dade County Junior College as reported by Donisi (1962) and Schiavone (1961), respectively, have been effective in improving the reading/study skills of college-adult populations. ETV is an excellent means for presenting lecture-demonstrations and a time saver as well. In fact, Berg (1964) predicts that as our colleges continue to expand, this medium will become increasingly necessary as reading centers attempt to serve masses of students.

6. Operant Conditioning. This is a relatively new technique used in the controlling of reading rate. Richard Whitehall at the University of Wisconsin reports using operant conditioning with groups of students working with specially prepared time clocks and self-selected materials. To my knowledge from reviewing the literature, work with this technique at the college level is still in the developmental stage at the University of Minnesota where it was first conceived by Raygor, Wark, and Warren (1966). Reading teachers must await further information and the results of studies evaluating this method.

7. Vocabulary Development. Vocabulary development at the college level should be made in terms of the subject matter desired and the number of unfamiliar words it contains. If the student desires vocabulary improvement, and makes no specification as to subject area, then the materials used should be of a general nature. Johnson (1962) suggested that one should encounter no more than two or three strange words per every 100 running words in a passage. His improvement procedure includes:

1. Check it and skip it.
2. Guess at its meaning from context.
3. Guess at its meaning from roots, prefixes, suffixes.
4. Pronounce it.
5. Ask someone or consult the dictionary.

McDonald (1964) listed the following methods for teaching vocabulary development:

1. The language history approach
2. Memorization of word lists
3. Use of the dictionary
4. Wide reading
5. Word analysis
6. Context

Brown (1966) came up with the CPD Formula which he hopes will merit many years of popularity as did the SQ3R Formula. Its components are: Context - Parts (prefix, root, suffix) - Dictionary.

These procedures are not new, and are self-explanatory. Among the excellent books and manuals recommended for use in a vocabulary development program are:

Learning Words in Context, Brown, Marion M., Chandler Publishing Company.
Consider Your Words, Jennings, Charles et al, Harper and Row.
Vocabulary for College, Books A.B.C.D., Diederich, Paul B. and Carlton, Sydell, Harcourt, Brace and World.
Word Wealth, Miller, Ward S., Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Word Attack: A Way to Better Reading, Roberts, Clyde, Harcourt, Brace and World.
Improvement of Reading, Glock, Marvin D., Houghton-Mifflin Company.
A Word to the Wise: A Guide to Vocabulary Enrichment, Rodgers, Paul, Prentice Hall.
SRA Booster Readings/Power Builders/VocabuLabs, Science Research Associates.
Word Clues, Taylor, Stanford, Educational Developmental Laboratories.

Summary

The group teaching procedures for college students of average potential presented here include: Lecture-Demonstrations, Practice in Timed Readings, Practice with Filmstrips and Pacers, Practice in Listening/Study Skills, The Use of Educational Television, Operant Conditioning, and models for Vocabulary Development.

We did not discuss untimed leisure reading of newspapers, magazine articles, and paperbacks nor the crucial matter of providing practice in the reading of college textbooks, although both are widely used techniques helpful in motivating the student of average potential.

Reading teachers may soon try a new technique, the ReQuest Procedure, which Manzo (1969) describes as having been successfully tested with small groups of individuals at the University of Missouri's Reading Center. Manzo urges reading specialists to experiment with the technique in group settings and report the findings.

With the exception of Operant Conditioning, the procedures listed here are more or less conventional. They have been used with success in many programs, though with conflict and controversy in others. If you find one or more suitable for the needs of your average potential students, stick with it, but keep an eye open for newer techniques that are sure to come.

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